

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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EB-07 MCT-01 ACDA-07 PC-01 AID-05 IO-13 /091 W

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R 060333Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4801

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 5733

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MY

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON INTERNAL AND REGIONAL  
SECURITY SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: IN A DISCUSSION WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON  
OCTOBER 4, PRIME MINISTER DATUK HUSSEIN ONN OFFERED THE  
FOLLOWING VIEWS ON THE SECURITY SITUATION INSIDE MALAYSIA  
AND IN THE ASEAN REGION:

A. THE INTERNAL ISURGENCY DOES NOT REPRESENT A  
SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO EITHER POLITICAL STABILITY OR ECONOMIC  
PROGRESS. WHILE UNDER CONTROL, IT NONETHELESS IS A SERIOUS  
INTERNAL PROBLEM REQUIRING SUBSTANTIAL ALLOCATION OF GOVERN-  
MENT RESOURCES AND MANPOWER.

B. THE SECURITY THREAT IS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE  
THAN IT WAS A YEAR AGO. THE WITHDRAWAL OF MALAYSIAN FORCES  
FROM THE BETONG SALIENT IN SOUTH THAILAND HAS DEPRIVED THE  
GOM OF INTELLIGENCE, BUT THE CT'S HAVE THUS FAR NOT CAPITALIZED  
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ON THE SITUATION.

C. WITOUTH FOREIGN ASSISTANCE THE TERRORISTS CANNOT MOUNT A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE GOM, UP TO THIS POINT, HAS NO EVIDENCE OF ARMS FLOWING TO THE REBELS. MALAYSIA HOPES TO BRING THE STATES OF INDOCHINA INTO PEACEFUL COOPERATION, BUT IS STILL CAUTIOUS AND WARY ABOUT THE INTENTIONS OF THE NEW REGIME IN HANOI. END SUMMARY.

2. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN THAT DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND MEETINGS WITH BUSINESS LEADERS IN NEW YORK HE WOULD BE ASKED ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN MALAYSIA AND HE ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER FOR HIS VIEWS ON CONDITIONS TODAY AND THE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT SINCE 1948 MALAYSIA HAD HAD TO DEAL WITH AN ARMED INSURGENCY AND THAT HE FEARED THIS WAS GOING TO BE A CONTINUING ASPECT OF THE LOCAL SITUATION FOR SOME TIME TO COME. WHILE A CHRONIC CONDITION, IT WAS NONETHELESS UNDER CONTROL, AND DID NOT REPRESENT A SERIOUS THREAT EITHER TO POLITICAL STABILITY OR ECONOMIC PROGRESS. RECENT GOVERNMENT EXHORTATIONS HAVE BEEN NECESSARY BECAUSE THE POPULATION AT LARGE TENDED TO FORGET THAT THE SITUATION EXISTED SINCE THEY ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL ABOUT THE COUNTRY AND PURSUE THEIR LIVES UNTOUCHED BY WHAT WAS GOING ON IN ISOLATED JUNGLE AREAS.

4. A CONSIDERABLE ALLOCATION OF GOVERNMENT RESOURCES BOTH IN MONEY AND MANPOWER WAS NEEDED TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION AND THE BUDGETARY STRAINS COULD BEST BE BORNE WHEN THE ECONOMY IS HEALTHY. THE GENERALECONOMIC UPTURN AND RISING PRICES FOR MALAYSIA'S BASIC COMMODITY EXPORTS ARE HELPING TO PROVIDE RESOURCES TO MEET THIS NEED.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE PROBLEM IS MANAGEABLE SO LONG AS THE INSURGENTS DO NOT RECEIVE SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE MALAYSIA. A POSSIBLE FLOW OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT FROM INDOCHINA WAS THEIR MAIN WORRY, ALTHOUGH UP TO THIS POINT THERE WERE NO INDICATIONS OF ANY SUCH FLOW. THE AMBASSADOR TOOK THE OCCASION TO ASK FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PRIME MINISTER'S ESTIMATE OF THE INTENTIONS OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM.

6. DATUK HUSSEIN SAID THAT MALAYSIA HOPED TO BE ABLE TO BRING THE SRV AND THE OTHER STATES OF INDOCHINA INTO SOME KIND OF FRIENDLY COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP. MALAYSIA HAS OFFERED TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN RESTORING THE VIETNAMESE RUBBER INDUSTRY AND WAS PREPARED ALSO TO HELP IN

OTHER FIELDS IN WHICH MALAYSIA HAD SOME EXPERTISE, E.G. OIL PALM AT THE SAME TIME HE WAS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT THE SRV'S INTENTIONS WERE ENTIRELY FRIENDLY AND THAT AT SOME POINT THEY MIGHT NOT DECIDE TO HELP THE INSURGENTS IN MALAYSIA. WE WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD OUT THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP, HE SAID, BUT WE WILL BE WARY.

7. RETURNING TO THE INTERNAL SITUATION, THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THE SAMAD ISMAIL CASE HAD RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SUSCEPTIBILITY OF THE MALAY TO COMMUNIST SUBVERSION. THE TRADITIONAL VIEW WAS THAT COMMUNISM HAD LITTLE APPEAL TO THE MALAY BECAUSE OF HIS DEVOTION TO ISLAM, HIS CULTURAL CONSERVATISM, AND HIS TENDENCY TO IDENTIFY COMMUNISM IN ETHNIC TERMS WITH THE CHINESE. DATUK HUSSIN SAID THAT THIS WAS TRUE, THAT THE MALAY SAW COMMUNISM PERSONIFIED IN THE CHINESE JUNGLE GUERRILLA, DRESSED IN A GREEN UNIFORM, AMBUSHING CONVOYS, AND SHOOTING SOLDIERS. THIS ASPECT OF COMMUNISM WAS STILL STRONGLY REJECTED BY THE MALAY. SAMAD'S SKILL AND SUBTLETY WAS IN PORTRAYING COMMUNISM IN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT WAY AND SERVING ITS ENDS BY PLANTING IDEAS THAT CHALLENGED TRADITIONAL MALAY RELIGIOUS VALUES AND DISPOSED THE MALAY TOWARDS OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY. HIS OBJECTIVE WAS NOT TO MOTIVATE MALAYS TO GO INTO THE JUNGLE, BUT RATHER TO MAKE THEM PERHAPS UNKNOWING AGENTS OF DISRUPTION AND REBELLION WITHIN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE. SAMAD'S ACTIVITIES CAME AS A GREAT SURPRISE TO MANY MALAYS, HIMSELF INCLUDED, BECAUSE SAMAD HIMSELF IS A PLEASANT, ATTRACTIVE, POLITE AND INTELLIGENT MAN. HE IS PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS FOR THESE REASONS.

8. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT COULD BE SHOWN AS THE EFFECTS OF SAMAD'S EFFORTS OVER THE PAST DECADE AND A HALF. DATUK HUSSEIN SAID THAT THIS WAS DIFFICULT TO DO BECAUSE HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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INFLUENCE WAS IN THE FIELD OF IDEAS AND NOT OF ACTIONS.

9. COMMENT: THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON THE SECURITY SITUATION GENERALLY CONFORM TO OUR ESTIMATE. HIS COMMENTS ON THE SAMAD CASE RAISE TROUBLESOME QUESTIONS. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SAMAD WAS BEING RUN AS A COMMUNIST AGENT. HE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ACTING AS AN INDIVIDUAL IN DISSEMINATING HIS PERSONAL IDEAS. HE DID NOT OPENLY ADVOCATE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE COULD NOT HAVE REMAINED AT THE HEART OF THE MALAY ESTABLISHMENT IF HE HAD DONE SO. QUERY: HOW DOES A MALAYSIAN WHO IS IN DISAGREEMENT WITH SOME BASIC ASPECT OF NATIONAL LIFE,- FOR EXAMPLE THE SULTAN SYSTEM OR ISLAM AS THE ESTABLISHED STATE RELIGION-TRY TO GIVE EFFECT TO HIS BELIEFS. THE STATE HAS DEFINED SUCH ADVOCACY AS SUBVERSION. IS ADHERENCE TO COMMUNISM HIS ONLY OPTION? IS HE FORCED TO

JOIN THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN? IF COMMUNISM HAS BECOME THE  
ONLY HOME FOR THE ADVOCATES OF FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL CHANGE IN  
NATIONS WITHOUT THE MECHANISMS FOR THE PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF  
POWER, IT HAS OCCUPIED IMPORTANT GROUND INDEED.  
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